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The Question of Imperial Complicity in the Jameson Raid

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chronicle which has always borne his name was enough to occupy any man's time. The *liber de legibus Angliae sicut teneri debent in regno Angliae*, which includes a copy of the treatise known as *Glanville*, must also have been transcribed during these years for insertion in the chronicle at the end of the year 1180. The break in Howden's life when he made the slow journey to the east in the train of Richard I, was present at the siege of Acre, and returned home in the convoy of the French king, is a sufficient explanation of any slight inaccuracies in his redaction of his earlier work.

Roger was an avid collector of information to the end. But he did not feel bound to insert in *Benedict* every story which reached him after he had begun the longer work. Howden is the only authority for the odd tale that after the emperor Henry VI had been crowned the pope kicked the crown off the emperor's head. This information was not added to *Benedict*, nor was the account of Tusculum, which follows in Howden.<sup>1</sup> It is very likely that Howden had the tale from someone who accompanied Queen Eleanor and Walter, archbishop of Rouen, on their journey through Rome in the spring of 1191.

The end of Howden's great chronicle is unfinished. He was still at work when King John was travelling through the north in the winter of 1201. Each item of information which Roger acquired in those last years must have been entered by him on separate pieces of parchment, each carefully dated. When Roger died these fragments were gathered together and transcribed by another hand with little regard for the order of events. At first sight, therefore, the narrative preserved by Howden of King John's early years seems confused. It is only when each item of information is carefully considered by itself, and when the precise note of date attached to each is marked, that the reader comes to realize how good an historian was lost when the parson of Howden ceased to write in 1201.

DORIS M. STENTON.

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### *The Question of Imperial Complicity in the Jameson Raid*

IN Dr. Jean van der Poel's powerful study<sup>2</sup> of the conspiracy to overthrow the Boer government of the Transvaal Republic at the close of 1895, interest inevitably centres on the indictment of Joseph Chamberlain, the colonial secretary. It is a notorious fact that the committee of inquiry in 1897 acquiesced, for patriotic reasons, in the suppression of vital evidence and hence, as E. T. Cook, of the *Daily*

<sup>1</sup> Howden, vol. iii, pp. 101-4.

<sup>2</sup> J. van der Poel, *The Jameson Raid* (Oxford, 1951).

*News* pointed out, the inquiry 'stopped short precisely at the point where it ought to have gone on'.<sup>1</sup> In February 1900, after the publication of some stolen documents in *l'Indépendance Belge*, the Radicals in the Commons demanded a fresh inquiry and the production of all relevant papers. The motion was, however, defeated by 286 to 152 votes and thus no new material of importance could be obtained until the publication in 1934 of Garvin's third volume of the biography of Chamberlain. While stoutly asserting that Chamberlain had not 'a shadow of complicity with the Raid',<sup>2</sup> he nevertheless printed material of so revealing a character that the old suspicion was merely rekindled and led Professor H. R. Winkler to point to the need for 'a re-evaluation of the numerous documents printed in Garvin's work'.<sup>3</sup> This became possible when on 1 January 1946 the Bower papers in the South African Public Library at Cape Town were unsealed. Collating these with all the relevant published material, Dr. Jean van der Poel was able to build up a formidable case against Chamberlain. I myself, after an examination of the recently opened files in the Public Record Office in London, and a close scrutiny of the Chamberlain papers, still in private possession, consider that her thesis of complicity would have been strengthened, certainly not weakened, by reference to these sources. In discussing the main points made by Dr. van der Poel, it will be necessary to refer to this supporting evidence. Some of it is contained in my 'Report on the Private Papers of Joseph Chamberlain relating to the Jameson Raid and the Inquiry',<sup>4</sup> but where new material has not yet been published, a detailed reference will be given.

What is the charge against Chamberlain? Briefly, that he was fully informed of the so-called Rhodes or Jameson plan to invade the Transvaal and overthrow its government on the pretext of going to the relief of the Uitlanders,<sup>5</sup> and that he abetted it by ceding the Bechuanaland Protectorate with its strategic border strip, and by sanctioning the concentration of an armed force at Pitsani, completely independent of Crown control. Chamberlain's defence, though he shifted his ground from time to time, was that as he had refused to listen to confidences volunteered by Rhodes's agents and

<sup>1</sup> J. van der Poel, *The Jameson Raid* (Oxford, 1951), p. 229.

<sup>2</sup> J. L. Garvin, *The Life of Joseph Chamberlain*, iii. 125.

<sup>3</sup> *American Historical Review*, liv.

<sup>4</sup> Printed in the *Bulletin of the Institute of Historical Research*, xxv. 33-62. Hereafter cited as *Bulletin*.

<sup>5</sup> Dr. van der Poel might well have devoted more space to a consideration of the Uitlanders' grievances, but she is on firm ground when she avers that the revolution was deliberately fomented. Sir Francis Younghusband could have been quoted more liberally, since he had an unrivalled opportunity of studying the situation in Johannesburg. He had been sent to South Africa as the special correspondent of *The Times* to cover the expected coup, and stayed in the house of Rhodes's brother Frank. See particularly pp. 60-70 in F. Younghusband, *South Africa of Today* (1898).

had never understood their 'guarded allusions', the compromising references to him in 'the missing telegrams' (i.e. those withheld from the committee at his command) were due to a distortion of 'casual expressions and incidental remarks'. Curiously enough, in the same breath, he complained 'of the breach of confidence which they (the cables) disclose'. This summary of his case is derived from his unpublished memorandum of June 1896 and a private letter to Earl Grey of 13 October 1896.<sup>1</sup> It must, however, be appreciated that he was very much more reticent before the committee of inquiry.

It is not difficult to dispose of the plea of ignorance, which depended on his assertion that he had refused to listen to Rhodes's agents. Although it is true that he stopped Dr. Harris at the first interview at the Colonial Office on 1 August 1895, there remained the awkward fact that immediately thereafter he had granted a private interview to Earl Grey, who, as a director of the British South Africa Company, had introduced Harris. When Chamberlain later appealed privately to Grey for support, the latter replied that it was only *after* he had explained Rhodes's design that Chamberlain 'declined to receive this information which you said you would be obliged to use officially if it were pressed upon you'.<sup>2</sup> Moreover, Chamberlain himself admitted in his memorandum that apparent or official ignorance was essential if he were not to quash the conspiracy.<sup>3</sup> His duty in this respect was very plain. At Jameson's trial the Lord Chief Justice held that no altruistic motive could justify the incursion. '... it is one primary duty of the State to seek to respect the independent sovereignty and the inviolability of the territory of the other. If either is attacked it means war.' Anyone abetting the offence was himself 'a principal offender'.<sup>4</sup> Hence it is not unlikely that Chamberlain's dangerous admission was one of the reasons why Lord Salisbury refused to sanction the publication of the memorandum.<sup>5</sup> Nor is it surprising that Grey was not summoned to give evidence at the inquiry and that Chamberlain omitted to inform the committee of their interview.

This foreknowledge alone explains, as Grey observed in the letter cited above, Chamberlain's 'subsequent acts'. It would appear from the second half of the cable of 2 August 1895, sent shortly after the interview with Grey, that Chamberlain, though refusing an immediate transfer of the whole Protectorate, had offered a 'large land grant' as 'alternative to justify residence B.S.A. Co. in Protectorate'. Its suppression by Garvin, on the scarcely credible pretext that it was in code jargon and quite irrelevant, suggests that he appreciated its significance.<sup>6</sup> Again, as Dr. van der

<sup>1</sup> *Bulletin*, pp. 46-51, 54-6.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* p. 56.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.* p. 48.

<sup>4</sup> See the Report of the Trial at Bar, *Regina v. L. S. Jameson and others*, for the summing up on 28 July 1896, especially pp. 346-50.

<sup>5</sup> *Bulletin*, p. 51.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.* pp. 46-7.

Poel shows,<sup>1</sup> Chamberlain's urgency in securing for the company the region that became the border base is remarkable. Thus, on 20 August, after the second interview with Harris at the Colonial Office Chamberlain instructed the High Commissioner by cable to secure a grant of land from Chief Bathoen, whose country included Gaberones, then designated as the military base. Yet he knew that the Bechuana chiefs were sailing on the very next day for England to plead passionately against any cession to the company.<sup>2</sup> Nor is it less remarkable that negotiations with two minor chiefs, of uncertain authority,<sup>3</sup> were authorized when Bathoen refused to make any grant. In this manner the Pitsani base was obtained. What is more, it was speedily transferred to the company on 18 October,<sup>4</sup> despite the fact that the obduracy of the leading chiefs prevented a general settlement of the Protectorate until 6 November.

The presence of the armed force at Pitsani also required explanation. Chamberlain could not deny that he had sanctioned, indeed facilitated, recruitment, but he pleaded that he had not had reason to doubt the company's excuse that it was necessary to protect the railway works (not yet begun) from native attacks. Here one finds Chamberlain constantly shifting his ground. In the Commons, on 13 February 1896, he justified the use of the force as a fire brigade benevolently intended to extinguish a blaze in a neighbour's house, though asserting at the same time that to have warned the republic of its danger 'would have been rather presumptuous' and unwarranted intervention in its internal affairs.<sup>5</sup> Later, in his memorandum of June 1896, his plea was that the force was only to be used with the sanction of the High Commissioner 'under circumstances of immediate danger to life'.<sup>6</sup> However, warned by an official of the contradictory arguments he was employing on this head,<sup>7</sup> he assured the committee of inquiry that he had never suspected the true reason. Here he is exposed by the most interesting single document on the Raid remaining in the Colonial Office files—the most important papers were removed by Chamberlain and are now with his private correspondence. When the company's application was received on 21 August 1895, the assistant under-secretary, Fairfield, and Graham, the acting principal clerk, ridiculed the company's allegations of native hostility, declaring them to be wild exaggerations. Graham wrote:

There is no need, nor would it be desirable, to accept the offer of the Co's police. We have still 350 B.B.P. and if they are not enough to keep order it will not be a question of Police at all. I do not see

<sup>1</sup> Van der Poel, *op. cit.* pp. 31–4.

<sup>2</sup> See their petitions in *Accounts and Papers* (1896), lix, C 7962, pp. 3–8, 13–14, and p. 20.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.* p. 15 and pp. 17–18.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.* pp. 26–7. Note the High Commissioner's proposal for delay on p. 18.

<sup>5</sup> Hansard's *Parliamentary Debates*, 4th ser., vol. xxxvii, cols. 309–18.

<sup>6</sup> *Bulletin*, p. 47.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.* p. 52.

how it is possible for the Company to commence operations before the Octr. rains.

After Graham had searched the files in vain for any record of native disturbances, as instanced by the company, Fairfield prepared a draft querying the company's assertions, and stating that the colonial secretary was averse to the surrender of exclusive Crown control over the armed force. Moreover, as Lord Selborne, the parliamentary under-secretary, objected that obstacles were being raised in the way of railway construction, Fairfield asked Chamberlain to decide, observing, 'The principle [*sic*] question is whether you will make any demur to letting the Company's police come in'.<sup>1</sup>

Finally, there is the incontestable fact of Chamberlain's decision against the postponement of the revolt, which, besides making him responsible with Rhodes and Jameson for the later 'fiasco', indicates his influential position in the conspiracy. In a letter of 18 December 1895,<sup>2</sup> Sir Robert Meade, the permanent under-secretary, had written to Chamberlain that he and Fairfield, the specialist on South Africa, considered it advisable to stop the movement on account of the quarrel with the United States over the boundary between British Guiana and Venezuela. Chamberlain replied, however, that Fairfield should see Rochfort Maguire, another of Rhodes's agents, and explain to him that immediate action was preferable to an outbreak coinciding with the crisis in Anglo-American relations. The consequence of that interview was the notorious 'hurry up' telegram of 20 December 1895, which arrived at the time when Rhodes was considering the abandonment of the plot, emissaries from Johannesburg having warned him that there was no enthusiasm for rebellion.<sup>3</sup> This cable, and those to the same effect from *The Times*, led him to disregard the warnings he received. Thus, when Bower urged him to go no further, Rhodes retorted that Bower was opposing Chamberlain's own policy. 'Then you are disloyal to your chief Chamberlain who is hurrying me up.'<sup>4</sup> Chamberlain devoted a considerable amount of space in his memorandum to a justification of his action.<sup>5</sup> He maintained that it had been his duty to intervene as Britain was the paramount power in South Africa, but he also denied that his action had constituted intervention. Again one notes another instance of his inability to perceive the inherent contradiction in his statements. Garvin, however, attempted a rather different defence for Chamberlain on this head, not without its own absurdity. For while on page 73 he suggested that Fairfield, being both frivolous and deaf, had caused 'an incidental misunderstanding' resulting in the unfortunate cable

<sup>1</sup> C.O. 417/160. Minutes on Secretary, B.S.A. Co. to the under-secretary, C.O. London, 21 August 1895, file no. 14680. I have to thank Mr. R. H. Wilde for drawing my attention to this document before I had myself begun to examine the files.

<sup>2</sup> Printed in Garvin, *op. cit.* iii. 71-2.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.* p. 76.

<sup>3</sup> Van der Poel, *op. cit.* p. 74.

<sup>5</sup> *Bulletin*, pp. 49-51.



of 20 December, on page 112 he flatly denied its existence, stating that the telegram of 7 November was 'the seventh and *last* of the missing telegrams'. This despite the fact that his source was unquestionably Chamberlain's own memorandum!

To make Chamberlain's innocence more plausible, it was desirable to show that the High Commissioner had been kept in the dark by his own subordinates in South Africa, in particular Sir Graham Bower, the imperial secretary, and F. J. Newton, the resident commissioner of the Bechuanaland Protectorate. Robinson's part was a sorry one. Though he disliked the plot, which he characterized as 'a damned conspiracy of Rhodes and Chamberlain',<sup>1</sup> he offered no formal protest, carried out his instructions and thought to ease his conscience and ensure his peerage by professing ignorance. In recent years there has been striking corroboration of Bower's assertion that Robinson was an accessory, albeit an unwilling one. In the *National Review* of December 1934, Viscountess Milner related that when she was in South Africa in 1900 as the wife of Salisbury's son, Lord Edward Cecil, Jameson assured her of Robinson's foreknowledge. Indeed, she had reported this conversation to Chamberlain who agreed that it was 'substantially correct'.<sup>2</sup> Obviously Lady Milner was unaware of the implications of the High Commissioner's connivance, but it is strange that Chamberlain should have been so incautious.

However, Chamberlain in 1897 had publicly accepted Robinson's protestations of innocence, and had acquiesced in the victimization of Bower and Newton, who were dismissed from the colonial service, though privately assured that they would before long be re-instated.<sup>3</sup> Newton's career was not adversely affected. He was knighted on retiring from the colonial service in 1919 and, engaging thereafter in politics in Southern Rhodesia, he eventually became High Commissioner for that colony in London.<sup>4</sup> He died in May 1948, silent to the end on this subject. By contrast, Bower's posthumous appeal to posterity might appear unpatriotic.<sup>5</sup> But Bower had arranged that his papers should not be available for a period of fifty years after the Raid. By that time, he thought, 'the public will regard these events objectively, and as ancient history . . .'. The trustees were, however, empowered to withhold them for another ten years, if this seemed expedient. 'For the public interest must come first.'<sup>6</sup> Moreover, he was far more

<sup>1</sup> Bower papers, cited by van der Poel, *op. cit.* p. 37.

<sup>2</sup> Van der Poel, *op. cit.* p. 62; see also *My Picture Gallery* by Viscountess Milner (London, 1951), ch. 26.

<sup>3</sup> Van der Poel, *op. cit.* p. 245.

<sup>4</sup> *Dominions and Colonial Office List*, 1931, p. 753.

<sup>5</sup> See a review in the *Cape Times*, 6 March 1952, by Sir Charles Dundas, a former Governor of Uganda.

<sup>6</sup> Bower papers. Bower to Trustees of South African Public Library, 30 January 1928.

deeply injured than Newton. As his position was more responsible, so his alleged offence appeared more heinous, and he was never raised from the lowly post of colonial secretary of Mauritius, to which he had been relegated. But more than the unfair check to a distinguished career—he had sacrificed the governorship of Newfoundland in 1895 to remain with Robinson in South Africa—he felt the slur of dishonourable conduct. Grey made strong representations on this subject to Chamberlain in a private letter of 5 January 1902, which, not having been cited before, may be quoted here:<sup>1</sup>

I sincerely hope that it may be possible for you to give Bower that promotion to which his loyalty gives him so strong a claim. It is I feel unnecessary to refer at any length to the nature of this claim. Suffice it to say that the Crown never had a more loyal servant or one who has had to carry a heavier burden. It is not too much to say that his heart has been broken by the feeling that he is regarded by his friends and by his own sons as a man who has betrayed his chief! (*sic*) I cannot tell you how sorry I am for him or how greatly I admire his conduct and character—for I repeat the Crown has not got in its service a more loyal man.

However, Bower obtained nothing, except a vague promise of possible promotion, extorted only after a long letter in May 1906 to Sir Montagu Ommaney, the permanent under-secretary of the Colonial Office, giving the facts of the case.<sup>2</sup> In 1909 he perceived that there was no hope of redress and decided to retire. Yet, though deeply injured, Bower is a reliable witness. It is true that he was disingenuous in explaining away his own initial approval of Rhodes's plan, but one finds no discrepancy when collating his evidence with that derived from the Chamberlain papers. The two sources supplement each other, they are not contradictory. And Bower, it must be remembered, wrote without any knowledge of what was in the Chamberlain papers, for he died in August 1933 before the publication of Garvin's third volume.

According to Bower, Fairfield feared that he too was to be victimized.<sup>3</sup> Death prevented his appearance before the committee of inquiry but it is a fact that his reputation was damaged by Chamberlain's insinuations<sup>4</sup> that he had caused misunderstandings. Chamberlain had been driven into a tight corner when Dr. Harris informed the committee of inquiry that he had had several interviews at the Colonial Office with Fairfield in which he had referred to Rhodes's plans. To maintain his profession of ignorance, Chamberlain could only suggest that Fairfield had either not heard or

<sup>1</sup> In the Chamberlain papers.

<sup>2</sup> The only copy of this is in the Bower papers.

<sup>3</sup> Bower papers, cited by van der Poel, *op. cit.* p. 195.

<sup>4</sup> *Second Report from the Select Committee on British South Africa*, H.C. 311 (1897), ix, p. 499.



grasped what Harris was telling him, for he personally had not been informed. Though asserting that Fairfield was 'absolutely truthful, absolutely honourable', he yet managed to convey the impression that he was generously defending an official either incapacitated by disability or culpably negligent. No one on the committee had the temerity to suggest to the colonial secretary a third, more probable, explanation—that his subordinate had both heard and reported to him. For it is plain, even from the written notes published by Garvin, that Fairfield was an authorized intermediary and habitually informed his chief of the progress of events.<sup>1</sup> It is true that after the Raid Fairfield was seriously strained and disingenuous in his comments on compromising documents,<sup>2</sup> but it is obvious that everyone in the Colonial Office was similarly affected by the tacit understanding to deny the charge of complicity. Thus one finds Sir Robert Meade prepared to endorse any and every statement of Chamberlain<sup>3</sup> and Selborne obligingly keeping 'within the four corners of his (Chamberlain's) own statements'.<sup>4</sup> It is very likely that Fairfield was thinking of his own threatened position when he spoke in defence of Sir Hercules Robinson, then stubbornly opposing a menacing policy towards the South African Republic. Chamberlain had commented angrily that the High Commissioner was both incompetent and biased. In the light of later events, Fairfield's reply seems pointed: 'He is certainly not a disloyal servant once he is clear what his superior wishes him to do, and is sure that the consequences are understood at home'.<sup>5</sup>

Did the Cabinet sanction the scheme? It is difficult to see where Garvin obtained the authority for his positive assertion of Cabinet approval,<sup>6</sup> as he did not cite his source and there is nothing in the Chamberlain papers to support it. We know that there was an arrangement to send reinforcements to South Africa but this does not in itself signify approval of the Jameson plan, whose essential feature was the surrender to Rhodes of the responsibility for directing the movement. Herein lay the great distinction between the Loch plan of 1894, propounded by the former High Commissioner, and the Jameson plan, abetted by Chamberlain. Dr. van der Poel suggests that from Chamberlain's letter to Salisbury of 26 December 1895 (the first Garvin can cite) it does not appear that the prime minister was fully informed of what had already taken place. Certainly Salisbury's reply of 30 December<sup>7</sup> shows little enthusiasm for intervention in the Transvaal and much concern about the probable German reaction. Why then did Salisbury not require Chamberlain's resignation? It may be surmised that the political

<sup>1</sup> Garvin, *op. cit.* pp. 70-3.

<sup>2</sup> *Bulletin*, pp. 42-5; van der Poel, *op. cit.* pp. 43-4.

<sup>3</sup> *Bulletin*, p. 40.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.* p. 41.

<sup>5</sup> C.O. 537/130, S.A./153 Secret. Minutes on telegram, Robinson to Chamberlain, 27 April 1896.

<sup>6</sup> Garvin, *op. cit.* p. 63.

<sup>7</sup> Not cited by Garvin. (*Bulletin*, pp. 36-7.)

repercussions on the fall of a great minister, and the attendant disgrace of Selborne, his own son-in-law, were considerations in the mind of that astute politician. However, the question of Cabinet approval of the plot must remain open until an inspection of the papers at Hatfield becomes possible.

The part played by the former Liberal government also merits attention, for it has been stated that earlier actions of the Liberal leaders also exposed them to suspicion. In particular, one has to consider an alleged pledge of support by Ripon (then colonial secretary) and an assertion by Rhodes that Rosebery had been informed of his plans. Dr. van der Poel<sup>1</sup> has therefore suggested that the Liberals were so discomfited by guilt or embarrassing rumours that they were obliged to abstain from insisting on a really searching inquiry. She concedes, however, that the main object of men like Sir William Harcourt was to prevent an exposure of Chamberlain as a minister of the Crown and thus avoid the consequent injury to England's name. As there is much ground for doubting the probability of the Ripon pledge and some uncertainty about Rosebery's position, it will be necessary to consider these questions at some length, especially as new material from the colonial office files and the Ripon papers can be adduced.

It has been stated that Ripon became alarmed at the course of events in the Transvaal and charged the new High Commissioner, Sir Hercules Robinson, to proceed to the Transvaal immediately an outbreak occurred, promising that he would send him from England a force of about 10,000 regulars to support his intervention. The statement was first printed in Basil Williams's *Life of Rhodes*,<sup>2</sup> but no authority was cited. However, when I. D. Colvin's *Life of Jameson* was published in 1922 it transpired that Sir Francis Younghusband had obtained the information from Sir Hercules Robinson.<sup>3</sup> The Ripon pledge received its widest publicity when Garvin printed 'an illuminating note' by Chamberlain recording the fact that Robinson had privately informed him of Ripon's promise.<sup>4</sup> These statements might seem to furnish incontrovertible evidence, and yet there are reasons for doubting the truth of the story.

In the first place, it must be noted that both Sir Graham Bower and Lord Buxton (Ripon's under-secretary) were astounded to see the story in Colvin's *Life of Jameson*. Buxton wrote to Young-husband expressing his disbelief, since Robinson had been sent out as a conciliator.

If you are correctly reported, I think you must have altogether misunderstood Sir Hercules, for he cannot, I feel confident, have held the view above expressed.

. . . . .

<sup>1</sup> Van der Poel, *op. cit.* pp. 232-5.

<sup>2</sup> 1921 ed., p. 260.

<sup>3</sup> 1922 ed., ii. 170.

<sup>4</sup> Garvin, *op. cit.* p. 58; *Bulletin*, pp. 52-3.

There was, I feel sure, no idea in the mind of Lord Ripon of using force, nor of sending out additional troops to South Africa in order to overcome President Kruger.

I speak with some authority on the subject as I was Under Secretary of State for the Colonies under Lord Ripon at the time and had a special responsibility for the South African Department.<sup>1</sup>

Younghusband's reply was interesting. He stated emphatically that Robinson had told him that the pledge had been given by Lord Kimberley (the foreign secretary). 'It was Lord Kimberley not Lord Ripon whose name he mentioned to me. . . .' One begins to doubt the reliability of Robinson when reading further.

He (Robinson) went on to say that when the Unionist Government came in they adopted his view and were prepared to support him. But this was only on the understanding that the rising was *spontaneous*. And Lord Rosmead (i.e. Robinson) was indignant at any idea of instigating it from outside.<sup>2</sup>

Robinson's role has already been discussed and there is no need to labour the fact that he was fully aware of the whole plot. Again, it was Robinson who gave Chamberlain the impression that *Ripon* had made the promise. That conversation, however, took place in June 1896 (not January as stated by Garvin),<sup>3</sup> when he had come home for consultation with the Colonial Office before the impending inquiry, and was anxious to save himself at all costs. It is curious that he had never alluded to this promise before, not even when on 4 November 1895 he proposed to Chamberlain a course of action virtually identical with that allegedly sanctioned by Lord Ripon.<sup>4</sup> It is not less curious that Chamberlain made no public use of this statement, although he had no scruples about referring to the Loch plan, rejected by Ripon.<sup>5</sup> This suggests that Chamberlain himself attached little importance to Robinson's revelation.

Again, the Ripon pledge presupposes a radical change of policy towards the South African Republic after September 1894 when the Loch plan was decisively rejected.<sup>6</sup> Yet from the subsequent official correspondence for 1894 and 1895<sup>7</sup> and Ripon's private papers it would appear that such a conclusion is quite unwarranted. There is evidence, indeed, of apprehension about German ambitions in South Africa which would threaten British hegemony, and a determination to prevent the Transvaal from reaching the sea. There are regular reports on the High Commission territories,

<sup>1</sup> Bower papers, no. 112. Buxton to Younghusband, 22 November 1922, and Bower to Buxton, 17 November 1922.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* Younghusband to Buxton, 29 November 1922.

<sup>3</sup> *Bulletin*, pp. 52-3.

<sup>4</sup> Garvin, *op. cit.* pp. 59-62.

<sup>5</sup> Hansard, *Parl. Debates*, 4th ser., vol. xxxvii, col. 317.

<sup>6</sup> C.O. 537/128. Minutes on Loch to Ripon, Secret, 18 July 1894; and Ripon Papers (Brit. Mus.), 2nd ser., vol. lxx, 43579, for Meade to Ripon, 8 October 1894.

<sup>7</sup> C.O. 417/111-62; C.O. 537/128/128-30; and C.O. 48/524-7.

particularly Swaziland, where the Anglo-Transvaal condominium was so unsatisfactory that Ripon decided in December 1894 to avoid the danger of war with the Boers by withdrawing from that region.<sup>1</sup> But there is remarkably little on the position of the Uitlanders in the Transvaal. If, indeed, an outbreak was imminent, then the High Commissioner was singularly negligent in failing to warn the Colonial Office of the fact. In reality, Ripon agreed with Meade<sup>2</sup> that Uitlander agitation must be damped down until their overwhelming numbers made a peaceable and constitutional transfer of control possible. Loch's 'extremely dangerous proposal' would encourage the Uitlanders 'to make excessive demands' and thus precipitate fierce resistance and bloodshed. 'Every nerve should be strained to prevent such a disgrace as another S. African war.' 'On the other hand if only we can stave off any premature ebullition the situation with the growth of the Uitlander party is sure to settle itself.' Moreover, the official dispatches show that between December 1894 and June 1895 the Colonial Office had decided on 'an appreciable reduction' of the Bechuanaland Border Police. Buxton thought 200 men quite sufficient, Fairfield inclined to 385.<sup>3</sup> Loch's objections were waved aside and one of the first actions of the new High Commissioner was to carry out this order. On receipt of the news, Fairfield observed—it was as late as 8 August 1895—'This is quite enough in these peaceful times'.<sup>4</sup> One may therefore wonder whether Ripon had indeed been so seriously afraid of rebellion in the Transvaal that he made the lavish promise of 10,000 imperial troops.

The allegation of Rosebery's connivance rests entirely on Rhodes's assertion that early in 1895 he had privately informed Lord Rosebery of his plans. Hans Sauer, Flora Shaw, and Graham Bower heard the story from him and possibly rumours reached other ears. Why should Rhodes have told a flagrant lie to those who were in his confidence? On the other hand, certain facts in Rosebery's defence have been ignored. First, there is Rosebery's denial of the allegations in a short note from Ripon to Meade.<sup>5</sup>

I have spoken to Rosebery about the matter which you mentioned to me the other day. He says there is no truth in the story.

Again, there is the fact that Rosebery pressed for a speedy inquiry and was most scathing in his condemnation of the report of the

<sup>1</sup> See also L. Wolf, *Life of the Marquess of Ripon*, ii. 228–34.

<sup>2</sup> See footnote 6 on p. 591. The minute by Meade is dated 15 August 1894. Ripon noted his agreement on 12 September 1894. See also Ripon to Rosebery of 5 September 1894 in Wolf, *op. cit.* ii. 222–3.

<sup>3</sup> C.O. 417/130. Minutes on Loch to Ripon, no. 659, 14 November 1894.

<sup>4</sup> C.O. 417/141. Minute by Fairfield of 8 August 1895 on Robinson to Chamberlain, no. 347, 12 July 1895.

<sup>5</sup> Chamberlain papers. Ripon to Meade, Confl. 22 June 1896. Bower was then in England and had told Meade of Rosebery's (alleged) connivance. See *Bulletin*, pp. 58–60.

committee. 'I have never read a document at once so shameful and so absurd. One would laugh, did one not cry.'<sup>1</sup> Finally, the appointment of Robinson as High Commissioner was due to Ripon, not to Rosebery, who foresaw the objections to Rhodes's nominee, insisted on Cabinet approval and actually suggested Sir J. West Ridgeway instead.<sup>2</sup> Ripon, however, maintained that Robinson was the only man who could appease the Dutch, recently affronted by the brusque imperialism of Loch.<sup>3</sup> For these reasons it seems necessary to leave open the question of Rosebery's connivance. It may be that when the Rosebery papers are studied—Crewe's biography is inadequate—some relevant information will be obtained.

Whatever the motives influencing the Liberals—whether embarrassing rumours about the party leaders or, more probably, a patriotic closing of the ranks—the consequence was 'the most abortive inquiry ever set on foot'.<sup>4</sup> Dr. van der Poel's conclusion that the shielding of Chamberlain did far more harm than the plot itself seems irrefutable. 'It left a determined and temporarily discomfited imperialist in power. And it aroused in the minds of the Afrikaners a deep suspicion of the government that he dominated. In such circumstances the negotiations that preceded the war could not be conducted soberly and generously. They were vitiated from the start.'<sup>5</sup> Those who query this sombre verdict and believe that nationalist fervour has biassed the historian, would do well to consider the warning given by Sir Robert Meade when he condemned the Loch plan in 1894: 'History would have a terrible tale to tell.'<sup>6</sup>

ETHEL DRUS.

<sup>1</sup> Marquess of Crewe, *Life of Lord Rosebery*, ii. 518 and 539-40.

<sup>2</sup> Ripon papers, 43538. Rosebery to Ripon, 22 December 1894.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.* Ripon to Rosebery, 21 December 1894; also Fairfield to Chamberlain, 5 January 1896 in *Bulletin*, p. 42, and Buxton to Younghusband, 22 November 1922, in Bower papers, no. 112.

<sup>4</sup> *Annual Register*, 1897, p. 170.

<sup>5</sup> Van der Poel, *op. cit.* p. 262.

<sup>6</sup> See p. 592 n. 2.